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## Mt. Diablo school board approves \$4 million in cuts

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CONCORD -- To balance its budget through 2013, the Mt. Diablo school board has cut \$4 million next year and is assuming 17 furlough days over three years that unions have not approved.

The board on Tuesday also adopted new boundaries for students who attend two schools that will close in June.

"If in fact the state tax extensions do not pass and we are forced into a situation where we have to make more budget reductions, I would suggest and request that we continue to have more budget reductions on the agenda," said board President Gary Eberhart, who participated in the meeting via speakerphone. "We're going to have to develop a list for the worst-case scenario. I would rather do that planning now rather than hear there's bad news and have to scramble around."

Superintendent Steven Lawrence recommended \$4.2 million in cuts from next year's \$274.7 million budget. His recommendation included reducing funds for professional development, instructional materials, Gifted and Talented Education programs, adult education and other programs and services.

Trustee Linda Mayo said she didn't want to cut adult education as deeply as Lawrence suggested because it would cause fees to jump significantly for "lifelong learning" classes that serve seniors. She suggested cutting \$300,000 instead of \$500,000 from adult education, bringing the total cut to \$4 million instead of \$4.2 million.

The board unanimously approved this reduction, with the

understanding that trustees could still make larger cuts in June, if needed. In addition, the district is counting on the teachers' union to approve a tentative agreement that includes three furlough days this year and is assuming seven furlough days for all employees in both 2011-12 and 2012-13, which have not yet been negotiated.

The three-year budget also includes reduced district contributions to health benefits for employees in three unions, which are at impasse. If Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed tax extensions do not materialize, the board expects to vote on deeper cuts that could include more school closures, selling property, and laying off librarians, secretaries and maintenance workers.

Earlier in the meeting, trustees agreed in a split vote to set new boundaries for students who attend Holbrook Elementary and Glenbrook Middle schools in Concord, which will close in June. Although a teacher and some parents asked the board to consider converting Holbrook into a K-6 campus, Eberhart, Mayo and trustee Sherry Whitmarsh voted to move forward with the closure and assignment of students to new schools.

Trustee Lynne Dennler voted no, saying that the board seems to be losing sight of what's best for students, while focusing on cutting costs. Trustee Cheryl Hansen abstained.

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